

October 17, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR DISCUSSION TODAY, OCTOBER 17, 1962.

SUBJECT: The Cuban Situation.

1. The establishment of medium range strike capability in Cuba by the Soviets was predicted by me in at least a dozen reports since the Soviet buildup was noted in early August.

2. Purposes are to:

(a) Provide Cuba with an offensive or retaliatory power for use if attacked.

(b) Enhance Soviet strike capability against the United States.

(c) Establish a "hall mark" of accomplishment by other Latin American countries, most particularly Mexico, and other Central American countries within strike range of the United States.

3. The MRBM capability we have witnessed will expand and the defensive establishments to protect this capability likewise will be expanded. There appears to me to be no other explanation for the extensive and elaborate air defense establishment.

4. In my opinion the missiles are Soviet, they will remain under Soviet operational control as do ours, they will be equipped with nuclear warheads under Soviet control (because conventional warheads would be absolutely ineffective), Cubans will supply most of the manpower needs with the Soviets permanently exercising operational command and control. Nevertheless, there will be a substantial number of Soviets on site at all times.

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5. Soviet political objectives appear to me to be:

(a) The establishment of a "trading position" to force removal of U.S. overseas bases. *and Berlin,*

(b) To satisfy their ambitions in Latin America by this show of determination and courage against the American Imperialist.

6. Consequences of action by the United States will be the inevitable "spilling of blood" of Soviet military personnel. This will increase tension everywhere and undoubtedly bring retaliation against U.S. foreign military installations, where substantial U.S. casualties would result,

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7. The situation cannot be tolerated. However, the United States should not act without warning and thus be forced to live with a "Pearl Harbor indictment" for the indefinite future. I would therefore:

(a) Notify Gromyko and Castro that we know all about this.

(b) Give them 24 hours to commence dismantling and removal of MRBMs, coastal defense missiles, surface to air missiles, IL 28s and all other aircraft which have a dual defensive-offensive capability, including MIG 21s.

(c) Notify the American public and the world of the situation created by the Soviets.

(d) If Khrushchev and Castro fail to act at once, we should make a massive surprise strike at air fields, MRBM sites and SAM sites concurrently.

John A. McCone
Director

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Several alternatives indicated below were posed for consideration at the close of meeting covered by memorandum dated October 17th.

All dealt with the specific actions U.S. Government should take against Cuba at this time. The discussions centered around:

- (a) Whether military action should be taken prior to a warning to, or discussions with, Khrushchev and Castro.
- (b) Notification to or consultation with our allies, including NATO, OAS, and others.
- (c) Referral to the United Nations.
- (d) Effect on the "balance of nuclear power equation" of the MRBM installations in Cuba.

Three principal courses of action are open to us, and of course there are variations of each.

(1) Do nothing and live with the situation. It was pointed out clearly that Western Europe, Greece, Turkey, and other countries had lived under the Soviet MRBMs for years; therefore, why should the United States be so concerned.

(2) Resort to an all-out blockade which would probably require a declaration of war and to be effective would mean the interruption of all incoming shipping. This was discussed as a slow strangulation process, but it was stated that "intelligence reports" indicated that a blockade would bring Castro down in four months. (Note: I have seen no such estimate).

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(3) Military action which was considered at several levels. The following alternatives are:

- (a) Strafing identified MRBM installations.
- (b) Strafing MRBM installations and air fields with MIGs.
- (c) (a) and (b) plus all SAM sites and coastal missile sites.
- (d) (a), (b), and (c) above plus all other significant military installations, none of which were identified.

Discussions of all of the above were inconclusive and it was asked that the group reassemble , and develop their views on the advantages and disadvantages and the effects of the following:

- (1) Warning to Khrushchev and Castro.
 - (a) If the response is unsatisfactory, pursuing a course of military action.
 - (b) If the response is unsatisfactory, referring to the OAS and the United Nations prior to taking military action.
- (2) Warning to Khrushchev and Castro and if the response is unsatisfactory, convening Congress, seeking a declaration of war, and proceeding with an all-out blockade.
- (3) Strike militarily with no warning, the level of the military effort being dependent upon evolving circumstances. In all probability this type of action would escalate into invasion and occupation, although the meeting was not agreed on this point.
- (4) Blockade with no warning and no advance notice such as a declaration of war, with the President depending upon existing Congressional resolutions for authority.

John A. McCone
Director

Talking Paper for Principals *OCT 17 1962*

1. Warning to Khrushchev and Castro:

a. Castro's response would be belligerent and unreceptive to accommodation. Khrushchev on the other hand has sought among his basic objectives the removal of the United States overseas bases and the allied position in Berlin and therefore he would seek a confrontation with President Kennedy and possibly a Summit meeting for the purpose of negotiating on Berlin and overseas bases from a new and different "platform."

Under these circumstances, the United States could not pursue the course of military action without encountering strong opposition from our Allies and from world opinion generally. Therefore, we could expect a continuation of Cuban-Soviet build-up, the placing of MRBM's in operational status in increasing numbers, increased surveillance difficulties because the SAM sites would be operational, and the continuation of Soviet support of Castro and a long delaying tactic on the part of Khrushchev while he was trying to negotiate an agreement with us on his terms.

In addition, Khrushchev would not keep this secret and would use our approach to his special advantage in Berlin and all other trouble spots throughout the world.

The United Nations as a body cannot oppose Cuba equipping herself with offensive weapons any more than it could oppose the United States establishing and maintaining bases in Spain, or placing missiles in Italy or Turkey.

The United Nations cannot oppose an alliance or treaty between Cuba and the USSR and in my opinion it will not ~~favor~~ ^{take} sanction either one ~~in either~~ action taken to date.

The OAS would probably demonstrate the same timidity that it has in the past, would look upon the problem as a United States problem exclusively and in my opinion, it is very questionable that the OAS would vote the necessary two thirds majority required by joint action against Cuba.

Therefore warning of Khrushchev and Castro would probably result in development of a protracted negotiation which would foreclose military action of any type to our possible disadvantage and from which we would have great difficulty in finding a way to extract ourselves.

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2. Warning of Khrushchev and Castro, and if their response is unsatisfactory, proceeding with an all-out blockade after a declaration of war. Undoubtedly the tenor of the response would be about the same as indicated in (1) above and it would be exceedingly difficult for us to make a judgment that the response was "unsatisfactory" and therefore we could proceed with the course of action. Doing so would in my opinion create great difficulty with all of the maritime nations and could very possibly result in retaliatory actions against U.S. flag ships by smaller maritime nations, such as Norway, Denmark, Holland, Greece, Liberia, Panama, etc.

Furthermore, actions taken at sea would involve overhauling ships, stopping, boarding and search, would involve provocative actions not against Cuba but against the ship's flag and hence the result of such action cannot be clearly foreseen, particularly if the nations of the free world were not in total sympathy with our Cuban policy.

Discussions to date indicate that most of the Western European countries and Canada do not share our views concerning Cuba, and since all would be seriously affected by a blockade, it appears to me that a blockade would cause us a great deal of trouble. Furthermore, the Soviets would undoubtedly respond with a most drastic blockade action against Berlin which is well within their capability and would be difficult for us to handle.